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**Statement on Second Anniversary of September 11**

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It is hard to believe that two short years ago this week, our nation was plagued by horrendous and vicious terrorist attacks against innocent Americans in New York, Pennsylvania, and our very own Commonwealth.

September 11, 2001 was not the beginning of terrorism against the United States. Defense officials tell us that terrorism has posed a risk to our national security for decades, but too often was not considered a large enough threat to heed those warnings. September 11 awoke us to the threat of terrorism. It was forever bookmarked in our history as the day when life as Americans knew it, changed forever.

The attacks on September 11, 2001 made us feel horrified, scared and angry. But as a result of the senseless attacks, Americans found a renewed sense of patriotism. American flags began to fly not just from flagpoles, but they appeared in windows, on doors and vehicles. Just hours after the attacks, men, women and children all across the country held vigils and waved flags showing support for those who lost their lives. The terrorists took many lives and caused our nation to grieve, but through that grief Americans rose up and refused to let those terrorists take away their spirit and love of America.

I visited the Pentagon a few days after September 11, and I still remember so vividly the smell of terror surrounding the entire building and complex. I was angry that such a brutal act of violence was committed against innocent people.

Since the tragedies, the Department of Homeland Security was established to prevent terrorist attacks within the United States, reduce U.S. vulnerability to terrorism, and most importantly, to share intelligence information among government agencies and departments.

Comprehensive anti-terrorism legislation provides new tools for law enforcement and for improved information sharing among Federal agencies to address terrorist threats. A "clearinghouse" was created to serve as the central location where all foreign- and domestically-generated terrorist threat and intelligence information is collected and reviewed. It is imperative that we harness that knowledge and use it to protect all Americans and help stop terrorist networks.

New laws are now in place to help prevent acts of bioterrorism. Enhanced controls on deadly biological agents have been implemented, as well as protections to ensure the safety of the food we eat and the water we drink. Just last week, Health and Human Services Secretary Tommy Thompson announced that Virginia will receive over \$31 million in federal funding to help bolster public health preparedness, and make improvements to hospitals to handle mass-casualty incidents.

Great strides have been made in securing our country and helping to fix some of the long-standing problems that we have had with the Immigration and Naturalization Service. While there is still much left to do, we are moving closer to a system that keeps terrorists out of our country, yet provides a fair and efficient service to those who justly migrate into the United States.

We are continuing to strengthen security in our airports, and have also taken steps to keep Americans safe while flying. Commercial airline pilots are now trained and equipped with firearms in the event of a terrorist attack on-board the plane. In addition, the number of federal air marshals has been increased by 5,000 to respond to potential terrorist threats or attacks on commercial flights.

I also introduced legislation that makes it easier to prosecute terrorists who try to use chemical weapons or other weapons of mass destruction within the United States. I am hopeful that the Judiciary Committee will take action on this important legislation soon.

We grieved with each other two years ago for the loss of our loved ones, friends, neighbors, co-workers and so many others who perished. Nothing will ever repair the losses we suffered as a nation. But today, their memories live on in our hearts and minds. As Americans, we have always had a strong willingness to stand hand in hand when times are tough. We must continue to show our patriotism for our great nation, and show the world that America will not stand for terrorism.

May God bless you and your family on this solemn day.

Randy Forbes  
Member of Congress